

VZCZCXRO0265
OO RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0346/01 2061152
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 251152Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2173
INFO RUEHOR/AMEMBASSY GABORONE 0240
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2463

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MASERU 000346

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR AF/FO, DS/FO, AF/S

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/21/2016

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: AMBASSADOR'S QUARTERLY SECURITY REPORT

REF: (A) STATE 116856 (B) MASERU 172

MASERU 00000346 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: June Carter Perry, Ambassador, EXEC , STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) The security situation in Lesotho continues to be critical as indicated below by the security incidents over the past several months. We believe it is important to note again to the Department the importance of having a full time Regional Security Officer (RSO) here. As has been previously reported, we have recently experienced the political murder of an opposition party leader and, prior to that, the attempted assassination of Lesotho's Foreign Minister. In meetings with international donors, we have discussed the ongoing tension between the opposition parties and the ruling party, and the continuing friction by the various opposition parties themselves. It is extremely important to note that the pending national elections in Lesotho have already had a deleterious impact upon the safety and security concerns of both citizens and foreign missions alike. As the U.S. Mission is in the process not only of transferring staff, but preparing for the arrival of additional personnel, including a number of small children, it is imperative that the Department provide the kind of protection only a full time resident RSO can provide. As Chief of Mission (COM), I feel it is my responsibility to bring, as I have for the past 2 years (and as my predecessor did for 2 years prior to my arrival), the essential nature of protecting USG personnel in Lesotho.

12. (C) I want to make it clear, and put on the record, that I consider any harm that comes to any American citizen occurring in the context of the Ambassador's repeated appeals to the Department as within the Department's responsibility. In fulfilling Presidential initiatives in Lesotho, to include PEPFAR, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) and the Africa Education Initiative, our staffing pattern has continued to grow. In this fledgling democracy, the underlying tensions mentioned above coincide with sustained criminal attacks, some of which are outlined in the security report. The potential of American citizens and USG personnel being inadvertently caught up in demonstrations not initially aimed at them, but in which they become victims remains a possibility. There was a July 20 youth political demonstration and it is expected there will be many from now until the spring 2007 elections.

13. (C) As indicated in the Secretary's recent Off Site, Theme II of Advancing Transformational Diplomacy is to create "a safe,

secure platform for conduct of foreign policy." This theme is to be implemented by the Assistant Secretary of Diplomatic Security according to ref (A). Embassy Maseru must rely upon DS to implement such safety and security. The Africa Bureau has been supportive of having this slot filled at post and it remains incomprehensible that Consular posts, some of smaller size as well as neighboring Swaziland, have full time RSOs while the American officers and staff present in Lesotho lack that same degree of protection. Therefore, as Ambassador I want to be very clear that I consider this my #1 personnel priority. It is not fair to put American personnel in a critical threat environment to advance some of the President's most important initiatives without guaranteeing the kind of security coverage they deserve and merit.

14. (C) Among the specific requirements for the RSO are regular review of housing security, including adequate lighting and location, on-the-spot training, regular supervision and monitoring of local guard performance. These functions cannot be carried out simply by a Mission officer (Management Officer) who is responsible for human resources, general services, housing and all relevant fiscal accountability matters pertaining to that position. The campaign for Lesotho's 2007 National Elections has already begun; we have been working with our international partners here, the Government of Lesotho (GOL), as well as a US PVO to provide the pre-electoral training and conflict resolution seminars in advance of these elections. However, those efforts do not guarantee that the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral processes will be totally free of conflict.

15. (C) With that important background, I would like to bring to your attention as well, the simple fact that a greater number of eligible family members at post makes the request for a full time RSO even more imperative. Visits by an Assistant RSO, who is 5 to 8 hours away, for high level visits such as the recent one of Former President Clinton and Bill and Melinda Gates, is certainly important, but I consider just as important if not more so, the constant presence of an RSO for the men and women

MASERU 00000346 002.2 OF 003

assigned to our Mission.

16. (SBU) Post looks forward to pursuing this matter and to having an affirmative response to this request in the near future before further unfortunate incidents take place such as the recent invasion of an American family's home by an armed gang.

17. (SBU) Lesotho Criminal Incidents - Second Quarter 2006

-- Thursday, July 13, 2006 about 19:30: An American citizen (a member of the Flying Doctors) was a victim of a home invasion, during which the whole family (including two young children and a visiting friend) were held hostage in their home by a gang of 5 men, with guns and knives. The family submitted to the gang's instructions and no person was hurt during this traumatic incident. The gang made off with food, clothing and money.

-- Thursday, July 13, 2006 all morning: There were some civil disturbances at the main Bus Stop area in Maseru. The sidewalk vendors were throwing stones and getting agitated due to the police wanting to shut them down for not having trading permits. The police had the situation under control by late afternoon. There were confrontations between vendors and Chinese store owners - a constant source of racial friction underlying the security situation in Lesotho. News reports referred to the conflict as similar to 1998 civil disturbances.

-- Friday, June 9, about 11 p.m.: An Embassy motor pool driver was returning to his own home by foot after watching a football match at a neighbor's house. He was a few meters from his own gate when two men appeared, one with a gun, another with a knife, demanding money. They threatened to kill him,

particularly when he said he didn't have money on him. He was told to raise his hands (and the knifeman made a motion as if to cut his nose off, but he was not hurt). They rifled his pockets, and made off with R50 and his cell phone. A neighbor noticed them running away and recognized them. The driver and the neighbor went to the police and reported the incident. When the police, who lacked transportation, arrived at the thieves' home, they had vanished.

-- Thursday, June 8, 2006, about noon: Three men held up a Youth Center that is located on the outskirts of Maseru, on the road to TY (north east of Maseru). At least one of the men had a gun. One of those held up was the wife of the Director of the German international development cooperation, GTZ, who works at the Youth Center. Money and cell phones, plus a new and recently donated (from UNICEF) movie projector were stolen. The assailants made off in the wife's vehicle. No one was injured. The wife phoned her husband who immediately contacted the local radio station Mo Africa, who broadcast the description of the vehicle. The vehicle was recovered soon after, about a mile from the Youth Center. The assailants have not been caught, nor have the cell phones or money been found. The police responded only after being pushed to respond by top people in the MFA. They arrived at the scene about two hours after being notified of the robbery.

-- Thursday, April 26, 2006 about 19:00: An international UNICEF staff member was caught up in a robbery at Leboso wines and spirit shop in Maseru. The robbery (staged by four masked armed men) was in progress when he entered the shop. He was forced to lie down and was robbed of a wallet containing 500 Rand, telephone card, medical insurance card and ATM card. Nobody was hurt. The matter was reported to the police.

18. (U) Embassy Security Meetings

-- Daily security meetings by MO acting as PSO are held at 7:45 am with LGF contract Operations Manager, SD Coordinator and FSNI.

-- Weekly security meetings are held to discuss implementation of guard orders and procedures; monthly meetings address policy, contract issues, etc.

19. (U) Diplomatic Community Security Meetings

-- A meeting was held on June 12 at the EU offices. The Commissioner-General and several Assistant Commissioners of Police also attended.

10. (U) Security Support Visits

June 10 - 14: A/RSO Anthony Walker visited post for a week

MASERU 00000346 003.2 OF 003

during high level visit.

11. (U) SD Coordinator Interviews

Three rounds of interviews were held to select a new Surveillance Detection Coordinator. The background investigation for the selected candidate is almost complete.
PERRY